

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 12226

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, MOPS, OREP, TH, US

SUBJ: STAFFDEL INTEREST IN MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT

REF: BANGKOK 12225

SUMMARY: JOHN J. BRADY, SENIOR MEMBER OF STAFFDEL THAT RECENTLY TOURED SOUTHEAST ASIA FOR HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, LOOKED INTO MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR AT REQUEST COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORGAN. BRADY DISCUSSED MAYAGUEZ WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS AS WELL AS OFFICIALS AT SUPREME COMMAND AND MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE WAS PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN ASCERTAINING WHETHER THERE HAD IN FACT BEEN A SPLIT OF OPINION BETWEEN THAI MILITARY AND CIVILIANS OVER USE OF THAILAND AS STAGING AREA FOR OPERATION. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THE VISIT TO BANGKOK OF STAFFDEL BRADY-PITCHDORD JUNE 13-18, HOUSE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE STAFFER BRADY SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME PROBING INTO THE MAYAGUEZ AFFAIR. BRADY TOLD US THAT WHILE IN MANILA, JUST BEFORE COMING TO BANGKOK, HE HAD RECEIVED A CABLE FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN MORGAN ASKING HIM TO LOOK INTO THE QUESTION. THIS WAS A SPECIAL REQUEST FROM MORGAN, AND BRADY'S REPORT ON MAYAGUEZ, HE SAID, WOULD BE MADE TO MORGAN RATHER THAN TO THE COMMITTEE AS A WHOLE.

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2. BRADY RAISED QUESTION OF PROPRIETY OF US ACTIONS

RE MAYAGUEZ WITH CHIEF OF STAFF, SUPREME COMMAND, GENERAL KRIANGSAK CHAMANAN, WHO SAID WITHOUT HESITATION THAT HE APPROVED OF IT WHOLEHEARTEDLY. KRIANGSAK LATER ALLOWED THAT THE MASSIVE PROTEST DEMONSTRATIONS AT THE EMBASSY WHICH ENSUED, INDICATED IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN A TACTICAL ERROR NOT TO CONSULT WITH THE RTG BEFORE BRINGING THE MARINES IN. KRIANGSAK TOLD BRADY HE HAD BEEN CRITICIZED IN THE PRESS FOR ALLEGEDLY HAVING AUTHORIZED USE OF THAILAND AS A STAGING AREA FOR THE OPERATION. HE DID NOT DENY THESE ALLEGATIONS, BUT SAID HE DID NOT WISH TO COMMENT ON "SO-CALLED" MILITARY-CIVILIAN SPLITS. HE THEN REPEATED HIS PERSONAL OPINION THAT THE ACTION WAS WARRANTED.

3. AT MFA, DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INFORMATION, DR. PRACHA GUNAKASEM, STRESSED TO BRADY THAT THE RTG SUPPORTED THE PRINCIPLE OF FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION INVOLVED IN MAYAGUEZ, BUT WAS VERY CRITICAL OF ACTIONS SUCH AS BRINGING MARINES TO UTAPAO AND LAUNCHING PLANES FROM THAILAND AGAINST TARGETS IN CAMBODIA, CONTRARY TO THE EXPRESSED WISHES OF THE PRIME MINISTER. PRACHA OPINED THAT THERE WAS NO NEED TO HAVE INVOLVED THAILAND IN THIS "SHOW OF FORCE", AND STATED THAT IF THE ACTION WAS NECESSARY, THE PLANES AND MARINES SHOULD HAVE COME FROM US CARRIERS IN THE AREA. PRACHA AND OTHER MFA OFFICIALS WERE ALSO CRITICAL OF WHAT THEY REFERRED TO AS ALLEGATIONS BY US OFFICIALS IN WASHINGTON AT THE TIME OF MAYAGUEZ OF A SPLIT BETWEEN THAI MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OFFICIALS WHICH LEFT SOME LEEWAY FOR OUR "UNILATERAL" ACTIONS. WITHOUT REFERRING TO SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS, THEY EMPHASIZED THAT TIMES HAD CHANGED, THAT THIS WAS AN ELECTED GOVERNMENT AND THAT ONLY THE PRIME MINISTER, NOT THE MILITARY, COULD SPEAK FOR THE RTG.

4. IF BRADY WAS LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF DIFFERENCES IN ATTITUDES BETWEEN MILITARY AND CIVILIANS TOWARDS MAYAGUEZ, HE FOUND THEM. KRIANGSAK LAUDED THE US ACTION AND DISMISSED THE SUBSEQUENT STUDENT OUTRAGE

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AS A TEMPORARY SIDE EFFECT OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE. MFA QUESTIONED THE NECESSITY OUR RETALIATION, CONDEMNED WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS THE NEEDLESS INVOLVEMENT OF THAILAND IN A US "SHOW OF FORCE", AND POINTEDLY ARGUED THAT OUR DISREGARD FOR THAI SOVEREIGNTY WENT TO THE VERY HEART OF THE ISSUES WHICH MUST BE RESOLVED IF THAILAND AND THE US ARE TO WORK OUT A NEW RELATIONSHIP BASED ON

MUTUALITY OF INTEREST.

5. WE EXPRESSED CONCERN TO BRADY OVER THE EVENTUAL PUBLICATION OF HIS MAYAGUEZ REPORT, POINTING OUT THE POTENTIAL DAMAGE THAT MIGHT BE DONE BY FOCUSING ATTENTION ON THE DIVIDED THAI MILITARY-CIVILIAN REACTION TO THE MAYAGUEZ EPISODE. HE SAID THAT THE REPORT WOULD BE CLASSIFIED, AND RECOGNIZED THE SENSITIVITY OF THE MATTER.
WHITEHOUSE

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